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Special Committee on
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DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE CALLS FOR FULLER INFORMATION FROM STATES ADMINISTERING DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

Hears Petitioners Calling for Talks on East Timor

The Special Committee on decolonization this morning requested administering Powers to transmit to the Secretary-General the fullest possible information on political and constitutional developments in the Territories concerned. Acting without a vote, it also requested that the Secretary-General continue to ensure that adequate information is drawn from available published sources in connection with the Territories concerned.

Also this morning, the Committee heard petitioners who called on the United Nations to work towards the withdrawal of Indonesian forces from East Timor and to sponsor talks between Indonesia, Portugal and representatives of the Timorese people.

Speaking on the question of East Timor were petitioners from Parliamentarians for East Timor; the Movement Contre le Racism et pour l'Amité entre les Peuples, Association de Solidarityé avec Timor-Oriental and TAPOL, the Indonesian human rights campaign in Canada. The representative of Iraq spoke on a point of order.

The representative of Indonesia reiterated his Government's position that the Committee should not hear petitioners on the subject of East Timor.

Also making statements were the representatives of Fiji, Cuba and the Soviet Union, who spoke on activities of foreign economic interests and military arrangements. It was stressed that a relaxing of East-West tensions should prompt administering Powers to disband their military installations on Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Petitioner J.A. Gonzalez-Gonzalez, speaking on the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization, said all colonies, regardless of their size, suffered equally under colonial regimes.

(page 1a follows)

For information media—not an official record

The representative of Norway objected to the Special Committee's decision to hear petitioners on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, while the representative of the United States said the Special Committee should rationalize its work by eliminating consideration of apartheid, which was adequately discussed in other United Nations forums.

The Special Committee decided to continue consideration of the question of Gibraltar at its next session, subject to any directives which the General Assembly might wish to give.

When it meets again at 3 p.m. today, 7 August, the Special Committee will continue to hear petitioners on the question of East Timor.

(page 2 follows)

The Special Committee on decolonization met this morning to continue its deliberations on the question of sending visiting missions to Territories, information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted by their administering Powers, activities of foreign and other economic interests, military activities by colonial Powers and the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. The Special Committee also intended to take up the report of the Subcommittee on Petitions, as well as the questions of New Caledonia, East Timor and Gibraltar.

A working paper on East Timor (document A/AC.109/1072 and Corr.1) summarizes consideration of the issue by the United Nations since 1961. From 1983 to 1990, the General Assembly deferred consideration of the question to its succeeding sessions.

The working paper also summarizes recent political developments in East Timor, stating that, according to a press report, as of October 1990, there were 12,000 Indonesian troops in East Timor, "but they were being turned to social works in the villages". Reportedly, six territorial battalions were engaged in construction of schools and bridges. Press reports also stated that the Indonesian military presence in the Territory was estimated by independent sources at 7,000 troops, while according to the resistance forces that presence was between 10,000 and 15,000 forces.

According to the working paper, which cites press reports, the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN) has some 200 to 400 fighters in the Territory, while a FRETILIN spokesman reportedly maintained that there were 5,000 armed guerrillas. Other sources indicate that as of 1991, the guerilla forces were reduced to some 150 to 300 rebels. The working paper also states that a recent report of the United States Department of State affirms that frequent military operations against insurgency movements took place in East Timor during the period under review. That report also indicated that rebels periodically harassed and terrorized civilians.

On 11 December 1989, Indonesia and Australia signed a comprehensive agreement for a zone of cooperation for exploration and exploration of offshore oil resources in Timor Gap. The agreement was to be implemented in 1990 following its ratification. On 22 February 1991, the Government of Portugal filed in the Registry of the International Court of Justice an application instituting proceedings against Australia in a dispute concerning "certain activities with respect of East Timor". The text of that application is contained in an annex to the working paper.

The working paper also contains a summary of observations to the human rights situation in East Timor, contained in Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1990, Indonesia, published in February 1991 by the United States Department of State. According to that summary, military abuses in East Timor continued but apparently at a reduced rate overall. Approximately 15 civilians were reportedly killed in military operations in 1990, a decrease from 1989. Areas of reported abuse included killing and physical mistreatment, sometimes torture, of civilians by the military and the police. Security forces periodically took persons for interrogation, usually without

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notification to families, resulting in at least their temporary disappearance. No cases of suspected permanent disappearance were resolved. Restrictions on freedom of speech and press existed, and the Government closely regulated visiting and resident foreign correspondents and occasionally reminded the latter of its prerogative to deny requests for visa extensions.

According to the summary in the working paper, while the Government considered outside investigations of alleged human rights violations to be interference in its internal affairs, it facilitated access in 1990 by Asia Watch representatives preparing a report critical of prison conditions, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs met Asia Watch's executive director in New York in September 1990. Amnesty International has been refused access to Indonesia. Informal Asia Watch visits, in addition to the prison study, have been made during the past several years. Access to East Timor by such organizations, which the Government considers biased, has traditionally been restricted.

Also summarized in the working paper are observations relating to human rights practices in East Timor contained in a recent report issued by Amnesty International entitled East Timor: Update on Human Rights Concerns since August 1990. The summary states that according to Amnesty International, the human rights situation in East Timor has not improved since August 1990. The organization was increasingly concerned about a pattern of short-term detention, ill-treatment and torture of alleged political opponents of Indonesian rule in East Timor since August 1990. Amnesty International was also alarmed by the number of detainees whose whereabouts remained unknown several days or weeks after their arrest by security forces.

The summary also states that Amnesty International was also concerned over the Indonesian Government's refusal to allow human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, to visit East Timor to investigate human rights violations. It noted that that refusal was inconsistent with the Government's frequent public assertions that East Timor was "open" and that foreign observers were welcome to visit.

According to Amnesty International, the summary states, more than 100 persons were detained during the period from August 1990 to January 1991 for their alleged involvement in apparently peaceful pro-independence demonstrations or related political activities. Many of those detained had reportedly been ill-treated or tortured in custody. Amnesty International was also concerned for the safety of all those detained for questioning, however briefly, by members of the security forces in connection with their alleged pro-independence activities. It believed that many of those detained during the period under review were or might be prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International was also deeply concerned over the number of person reported to be held in unacknowledged detention, some of whom might have "disappeared".

The working paper concludes with a discussion of economic and social conditions in East Timor, and states that information in that summary was derived from sources other than the Portuguese Government. According to press

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reports, in mid-June 1991 the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia announced at a meeting in the Netherlands of representatives of countries which have been providing assistance to Indonesia that Australia intended to contribute approximately $2 million in aid for a number of sanitation, agricultural and irrigation projects in East Timor. The implementation of such projects would involve for the first time the deployment in the Territory of six experts who would begin to arrive in East Timor in September 1991.

Also before the Special Committee is the report of the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance (document A/AC.109/L.1760). Regarding the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization, the Subcommittee made a series of recommendations regarding the specialized agencies. The Subcommittee calls on the agencies concerned to continue to contribute to the implementation of the Declaration and that their assistance be conducive to accelerating economic development of the small Territories. It asks the Special Committee to emphasize the importance of coordination by the specialized agencies and to reiterate its conviction that consultations with the specialized agencies were an appropriate means for further strengthening their role in the decolonization process.

The Subcommittee also submitted a series of recommendations on the question of dissemination of information on decolonization, including that the Department of Public Information (DPI) should continue to identify its publicity work in the field of decolonization and disseminate more widely basic decolonization resolutions of the United Nations. The DPI should also be requested to provide the Special Committee with feedback from the United Nations Information Centres regarding their dissemination of information on decolonization.

An annex to the report details consultations undertaken with the specialized agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The Special Committee will also consider a working paper on New Caledonia (document A/AC.109/1079). In 1990, the Special Committee noted that the French authorities were taking positive measures to promote political, economic and social development in the Territory to provide a framework for its peaceful progress to self-determination. In October 1990, the General Assembly urged all the parties involved to maintain their dialogue, and invited them to continue promoting a framework for peaceful progress towards an act of self-determination in which all options were open and which would safeguard the rights of all New Caledonians.

The working paper also summarizes political developments in the past year. In December 1990, the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement had met for the second time, in Paris. The meeting had concentrated on developments in the social and economic fields, and the working paper, citing press reports, states that the overall balance sheet was favourable but that further efforts on the part of France were required to bring about more equitable economic distribution among the three provinces and to provide

education and training that would enable Kanaks to participate on an equal footing in the economy and government of the Territory. The French Prime Minister had announced that in order to compensate, several new intensive programmes would be undertaken. Both the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS) and the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR) had called upon France to reinvest in the Territory whatever amount of funds was due the State from the exploitation of nickel, currently some 166 million French francs. The French Prime Minister agreed that negotiations should be held on that point.

A discussion of economic conditions in the Territory is also included in the working paper, which states that the basis of New Caledonia's economy is the nickel industry, which accounts for approximately 80 per cent of its exports. The largest exports in 1990 after nickel were fisheries, which accounted for a total of 977 million communauté financière du Pacifique francs. The mining sector and most good arable land are controlled by European settlers. The majority of the indigenous Kanaks are involved in subsistence agriculture, which plays a minor role in the economy.

Also before the Special Committee is a working paper on Gibraltar (document A/AC.109/1074). In 1990, the General Assembly urged the Governments of Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their negotiations with the object of reaching a definitive solution to the problem of Gibraltar in the light of relevant Assembly resolutions and in the spirit of the Charter.

The working paper summarizes developments in the past year, during which the Spanish Prime Minister stated that disagreement over Gibraltar was currently the only important obstacle to better relations between the two Governments. Regarding the expansion of the Gibraltar airport, which is seen as an important factor in the Territory's future development and growth, the administering Power states that the Gibraltar Government continues to refuse to implement the airport agreement, seeing it as a concession of sovereignty to Spain.

Requests for Hearings

In response to the Committee's decision to accede to requests for hearings on East Timor, the representative of Indonesia said he strongly opposed the participation of petitioners speaking on East Timor.

The representative of Norway said the Committee was not mandated to deal with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Committee also decided to accede to requests for hearings on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), the United States Virgin Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, New Caledonia and the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

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Visiting Missions to Territories

SHIRIN TAHIR-KHELI (United States) said Working Groups on decolonization reform were aiming to insure the effective functioning of the Committee. Encouraging progress had been achieved. Enhanced cooperation between the administering Power and the Committee was important. The United States would seriously evaluate its relation with the Committee following reforms.

Re-evaluation of language on military installations and other matters was necessary, she said. For example, with Namibian independence, apartheid was no longer a topic to be dealt with by the Special Committee. Apartheid was better handled in other bodies of the United Nations system.

Implementation of Decolonization Declaration

J.A. GONZALEZ-GONZALEZ, a petitioner, said the Declaration was the sole foundation of the Special Committee. Cosmetic changes, not decolonization, remained in the colonial system. Accredited journalists at the United Nations were interested in the actions of the Special Committee on behalf of the 19 Territories under its mandate. It seemed that very little was being done. The Special Committee should further be dealing with more than 19 Territories. Other agencies, such as the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), should concern themselves with the plight of colonized people.

He asked why so little aid was given to colonial Territories. Was limited aid a result of limited resources? If so, that should be publicly stated. If the problem did not derive from resources, perhaps it resulted from political interests of the administering Powers, which prevented organizations from entering the Territories. The Special Committee must seek solutions to those problems. Specialized agencies must deal with all, and not just some of the Territories.

In recent debates in the Special Committee, the subject of the Puerto Rican people had been raised by several speakers, he went on. Puerto Rico was the largest small territory but that did not make it superior. Slavery was a single entity; matters related to it were all equal, since suffering, exploitation and persecution applied equally to all.

In the course of the Committee's work, relatively few delegates participated, and those who did tended to leave after making statements, he said. They should be required to participate more thoroughly in the debate and decision-making process at all levels. Participation by many specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system was lacking. It was not clear whether or not they had been reminded about the debate and their potential role in it. A lack of interest or bureaucratic incompetence should not impede the important work of the Committee.

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Foreign Economic Interests, Military Arrangements

RATU MANASA SENILOLI (Fiji) said the Committee had recently taken welcome steps to rationalize its work, including merging its subcommittees. Through visiting missions to Territories, hopes and aspirations of the people there could be heard and realized.

Foreign economic interests in colonial countries were based on a profit motive, he said. In many cases, conglomerates extracted as much resource as possible, leaving behind a shell at independence. Some benefit, in the form of technology transfer, was obtained from the arrangements. The Centre on Transnational Corporations had made commendable efforts to create a code to regulate the conduct of transnationals. The administering Powers should work to enable the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories to reap maximum benefit from foreign economic interests.

It was hoped that the upcoming referendum in Western Sahara would result in the will of the people being heeded. It was also hoped that the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands would join the Organization before the next session of the General Assembly and that in the present decade, New Caledonia would be able to do the same.

RAFAEL J. MARTINEZ BOUE (Cuba) said great change had occurred since the Special Committee's last session. Work to eliminate hotbeds of tension was being done at the international level with the warming of East-West relations. The situation in the third world, however, remained largely unchanged. That was especially true with regard to Non-Self-Governing Territories. The exploitative effects of military installations had not changed, and yet efforts were made to avoid the condemnation of such installations. The structure of antagonistic blocks had disappeared, and the need for the bases should be called into question. An attempt was also being made to eliminate the negative effects of apartheid from the debate of the Committee.

Such positions, which issued from colonial powers, had long existed, he said. The systematic refusal to allow visiting missions was a symptom of the guilty indifference on the part of colonial powers. It was understood that the populations of colonial Territories had no other choice but to abandon hope for their inalienable right to independence.

The Special Committee had acted in keeping with the times, he went on. In the past year, a serious and profound reform and revitalization process had been initiated. The United Nations Decade on the Elimination of Colonialism had just begun. Other decades had been enthusiastically welcomed, but such was not the case with that Decade. A plan of action had not been drafted. The Non-Aligned Movement had addressed itself to the issue, and would continue to work to make the Decade a reality. The Organization must step up its dissemination of information on colonialism. The DPI must inform the public on the subject. The Special Committee had a key mandate, particularly until apartheid was eradicated.

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DMITRIY BYKOV (Soviet Union) said the post-confrontational period of world development offered new possibilities. The process of decolonization should be completed by the year 2000. The transition towards cooperation on the world scene and the independence of Namibia pointed to the potential for success in the field of decolonization. It was hoped that the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) would meet success. People in small, Non-Self-Governing Territories also had a right to self-determination. The United Nations had an obligation to those people in accordance with the Organization's Charter.

The Special Committee was currently working to rationalize its functioning, he went on. Progress had been achieved thanks to collective efforts, but the work must continue. Practical measures would be necessary for the earliest possible realization of self-determination. New forms of machinery needed to be developed to address the needs of each Non-Self-Governing Territory. The effectiveness of the United Nations would depend on the nature of the cooperation between the Special Committee and the various administering Powers. Some prejudices might need to be overcome. Visiting missions provided important data to the Committee. Timely submission by the administering Powers would also enhance the effectiveness of the Committee.

Promoting economic and social development in Non-Self-Governing Territories was linked to independence, he said. The administering Powers were duty-bound to promote political, social and economic development in the Territories. The interests and rights of the local populations were of paramount importance. Foreign economic interests must be brought into line with those considerations based on strict measures.

The United Nations regarded the use of Territories for military activities to be an obstacle to implementing the Declaration, he continued. Positive changes around the world offered potential solutions to those problems.

Report of Subcommittee

RENAGI RENAGI LOHIA (Papua New Guinea), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance introduced its final report. He said that for the past nearly two decades, the Subcommittee had not only facilitated contacts between the Special Committee and liberation movements, but had also served to arouse world public opinion and support in favour of the decolonization process. The merger of the two subcommittees did not imply that their functions were no longer necessary, but rather that the need to keep the international community abreast of the decolonization process was pressing. That and other functions of the subcommittee would not be diminished as a result of the merger.

New Caledonia

YAAN CELENE URGEI, Secretary-General of the Front uni de liberation kanak, said France had enormous interests in New Caledonia which were at stake

in its colonial policies. The Matignon Agreement served to denigrate Kanak independence. The 1998 referendum would not solve anything. The FLNKS alone observed the Agreement, playing into the hands of the French colonialists. The Kanak people had turned their backs on FLNKS. The number of supporters had dwindled to 150. The FLNKS did not represent the Kanak people.

The FLNKS had undertaken to assimilate and colonize the Kanak people, he went on. The local people were not allowed to develop their own land. The Matignon Agreement meant the destruction of the culture of the Kanak people. Other recent proposals submitted by France were equally unacceptable, as they maintained the French colonial role in the region. French colonialism set a trap for FLNKS and sought to involve it in the 1995 elections. Legislative elections would take place in 1993. The Matignon Agreements would not receive the support of the Kanak people. The political manoeuvres currently being employed were not new. The decolonization process provided for in the Matignon Agreement was a fraud; in the three years since its signing, conditions in New Caledonia had deteriorated. In the context of the Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, France had been attempting a recolonization process in the region.

Recently in Barcelona, a Commission had decided to explore the situation in New Caledonia, he said. The recent visiting mission to New Caledonia had been welcome, and it should report its findings to the South Pacific Commission and the United Nations. A February 1989 report submitted to the French Government had not been followed-up. That document should be circulated at the United Nations.

East Timor

The representative of Indonesia reaffirmed his country's opposition to the participation of the petitioners on the question of East Timor.

BERYL GAFFNEY, a member of the Canadian House of Commons, said the people of East Timor had suffered "one of the most ruthless attacks in modern history", since the Indonesian invasion 15 years ago. As much as one third of the population of the island had perished due to the initial war and subsequent acts of violence, starvation and disease perpetrated by the Indonesian army against the Timorese people. It was genocide which should not be allowed. She said Indonesia must be condemned for its disregard and disrespect of the right of the East Timorese to self-determination and independence along with the constant verifications of violations of fundamental human rights.

She said the Organization must encourage the membership to develop coherent policies which linked international human rights to aid, trade and refugee determinations. Observance of human rights must be a basic criteria for foreign aid. The world community must hold Indonesia to account. The Committee must work towards the withdrawal of Indonesian forces and the Timorese people then allowed to decide their own future.

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SABAH TALAT KADRAT (Iraq), speaking in a point of order, said the previous speaker had broached a subject which had nothing to do with the work of the Committee.

MICHEL ROBERT, a representative of the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, said the Government of Indonesia had flouted United Nations resolutions on East Timor. Integration with another country must be freely chosen by the people of a Territory, but East Timor today was a veritable colony of Indonesia. The population of East Timor did not consider that integration with Indonesia had solved the problems of decolonization, and was still traumatized by the harsh experiences of the 1976 integration. Political, social and economic problems had not been reduced. East Timor had been inundated by settlers from Indonesia, and there was a great deal of distrust between the settlers and the Timorese. There was hatred and distrust of the military, and arrests and torture continued.

Citing a recent statement by the representative of Indonesia to the Special Committee in which Indonesia had said that the last vestiges of colonialism must be eliminated, he said there could not be two yardsticks. There was only one international law, which must be applied to all countries.

CARMEL BUDIARDJO, a petitioner from TAPOL, the Indonesian human rights campaign in Canada, said the East Timorese resistance movement had adjusted well to the new circumstances provided by the "opening up" of the Territory by the Indonesian authorities, developing new ways to express their political aspirations. But conditions for the East Timorese had not changed. Their fear of retribution by the security forces dominated their everyday life and the freedom to travel was still very restricted. The resistance had restructured their organization to give greater focus to the political movement of clandestine fronts in the towns. The Indonesian authorities had also done some restructuring, pursuing a two-pronged strategy of intensifying counter-insurgency operations and attempting to win "hearts and minds". The upsurge in the towns meant that "soft territorial approach" could not cope with with the new situation in which Timorese youth were displaying a rebelliousness comparable to the Palestinian youth in the occupied Arab territories.

The time for peace talks had come for East Timor, he said. The Secretary-General should convene a meeting between the different parties, Indonesia, Portugal and representatives of the East Timorese people. The international atmosphere was now ripe for a solution to the colonial issue in the Territory.

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